

When my children were babies, I learned something, at least a few things. One thing that I learned is how little I noticed some basic things that I could do. I don't know if you know this, but these days you are only supposed to lay babies on their backs to sleep. Doctors are concerned with "sudden infant death syndrome" and in order to prevent that it is important that babies are not sleeping in a position where they could be smothered. So, until they can roll over it is important that babies sleep on their back. Well, how are babies to learn how to roll over if they are never sleeping on their tummy? I'm glad you asked. You have to give them tummy time. Mercedes hated tummy time. We have a video of one of the first times she rolled over. She rolled over and that is just wonderful but it was at the cost of our hearing for the rest of the day. We laid her on her tummy and gave her a few minutes and she just hated it. She screamed and screamed and then the windows broke, but then she rolled over. It took several months before Mercedes could easily and naturally roll over. This made me think, "What a gift it is to be able to roll over." Not only that, but babies learn a lot their first year. They learn how to crawl and walk, but this doesn't come easy. They learn by falling down.

Okay, I have a point in all of this. None of that came easy for her. It was tough for her to roll over the first time

We are going to look at 2 Timothy 2:1-7 and we are going to see Paul encouraging Timothy to "Be strong." As Christians we must be strong as we follow Christ. But this may not be easy. Paul compares following Christ to being a soldier, an athlete and a farmer. All of these metaphors are hard work.

Let's look at 2 Timothy 2:1-7:

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. ³ Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer. ⁵ Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules. ⁶ The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. ⁷ Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

- I. Challenge (verse 1): In verse 1 Paul tells Timothy to "Be strong." Now, what is Timothy to be strong in? Timothy is to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. He is to be strong in the relationship he has in Christ. Everything in the Christian life is about Christ. We have this relationship in Christ. Let me park here for just a moment. I know and really do believe that children, teenagers and especially junior high school students struggle with acceptance. That is proven. Children and teenagers are learning who they are, and they are learning self-confidence. But I think there is a fallacy out there. There is the thought that children and teenagers grow out of this self-confidence challenge. I wonder, do we ever grow out of the self-confidence problem, or do we learn how to live with it? Maybe we learn how to hold ourselves up at the expense of others; maybe we learn how to walk around with our head down. Maybe we learn how to deal with the feeling of not being good enough. Maybe we learn how to work hard and try to earn acceptance. Maybe we learn how to gain acceptance by money, power, looks or giftedness; but

we still feel like we are not good enough. What do you think? I am not stating this to be critical, no I am stating this because you need to know that this is the power and awesomeness of the idea that God accepts us. God gives you and me unmerited favor. God loves you and me and He accepts you and me unconditionally. Paul is about to challenge Timothy to be strong. This means Timothy and we are as well to be challenged to persevere in our Christian faith. But the Bible makes it clear that we are to do this knowing that we are accepted by Jesus. We don't have to try to earn acceptance. Maybe you think you do with people, but NOT WITH JESUS. You are accepted and loved by Jesus. You are good enough for Jesus. I say that because sometimes the devil gets in my head and tries to tell me that I am not good enough and I don't think I'm alone. I think we all need to park at this verse and I think we all need reminded that Jesus has accepted us and Jesus will continue to accept us the way we are. But we must persevere and stick with Jesus, because we are good enough for Jesus, but He wants to improve us for sure.

- a. Subordinate challenge (verse 2): In verse 2 we have another challenge. The first challenge was to "be strong" and this one supports that challenge. Paul talks about teaching and doctrine. Paul reminds Timothy of these things that he has heard said. Paul is once again reminding Timothy of the things he has learned. Paul has done a lot of teaching as he mentored Timothy. Paul says that others witnessed this teaching. Now, Paul says to pass on this teaching. But Paul encourages Timothy that he should pass this on to those who can teach others also. Timothy must pass this on to the church leaders, the elders. Remembers James 3:1 says that church leaders will be held to a high standard in judgment.
- b. We must also be sure to teach others so that they can teach, but in the same way we must remember that God has a high standard for teachers and church leaders.
- c. Subordinate challenge/encouragement and metaphor of a soldier introduced: "suffer with me." (verse 3-4)
- d. Now we come to verse 3 and 4 and in verses 3-4 Paul introduces the first of three metaphors related to Christian living. Paul writes about the need to suffer as a soldier for Christ.

II. Metaphor of the Christian life as a soldier (verse3-4)

- a. Paul tells Timothy to suffer as a soldier for Christ. I thought of the way soldiers suffer:
 - i. A soldier suffers time with family. Sometimes God may call us to make sacrifices for the Gospel. I read that in the first century: Soldiers were not even allowed to marry during their term of service (although some had unofficial concubines while they

were stationed somewhere) and were to be strictly devoted to their service for over twenty years; only about half survived to retire.¹

1. A soldier suffers the comforts of home
2. A soldier suffers pay
3. A soldier suffers emotionally in having to take human life and possibly face post traumatic stress disorder
4. A soldier must go through boot camp.
 - a. In high school I was in JROTC. This is a high school military training program.
 - b. We learned all kinds of things about the Navy and we even got to go on trips. We learned how to wear a uniform and we passed inspections. We had to march. Now that was my struggle. It was exciting learning how to do what they call “Drill.” But I just couldn’t do it. The leader would be yelling cadence and then he would start saying, “Steve Rhodes get in step.” That was such a struggle for me. But those in the military must learn this type of discipline and that is the next point.
5. A soldier learns humility and submission
 - a. So must I for the Gospel. I must also learn humility and submission in the church and following Christ. I must learn that sometimes being strong in Christ means taking some emotional shots and being hurt. But we can do that because we are loved and accepted by Christ unconditionally. Sometimes as Christians we suffer the comforts of home or pay as God calls us to certain ministries.
 - b. Now certainly for Paul and Timothy they were suffering all this and more. They were suffering as a soldier.

III. Metaphor of the Christian life as an athlete (verse 5)

¹ Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament (2 Ti 2:3–4)*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

- a. In verse 5 Paul gives the metaphor of an athlete. Athletes work hard to learn and master a sport. I read that “Athletes were pledged by oath to ten months of such preparation preceding their participation in the Olympic games. The winner’s prize was a garland.”²
- b. These athletes worked hard and Paul is encouraging Timothy to be strong and persevere in the Christian life like an athlete. Paul is encouraging Timothy and us that we can serve and work for Christ in the comfort of His love for us. But serving Christ may be difficult at times. We may fall down and get bruised, we may struggle, but like an athlete we can get back up and keep running. Sometimes as Christians we are struggling not because of our own struggles with sin or lack of devotion, but because of the world around us. Christians are becoming a minority. We are facing persecution in the US and will continue to. At this point our persecution is mainly verbal, but that is difficult to. You may want to do the right thing, you know be honest and everyone else says it doesn’t matter. That is tough but just like an athlete keeps at the practice and the workouts regardless of those that challenge him; we also must keep at it, though we will face hardships.
- c. We also have a reward. An athlete in the Olympic Games received a garland. As Christians we have eternal life in paradise. As Christians we have a fuller life in Christ.

IV. Metaphor of the Christian life as a farmer (verse 6)

- a. Paul then talks about farming. I thought about this a little more. You see a farmer must have faith and trust in what he sows he will reap. So we also must trust in God that we will reap what we will sow. That is what Paul is talking about. A farmer works hard but there is a reward.
 - i. Following Christ is worth it. We are rewarded in the end and we are rewarded now. Christ is with you, Christ is in you. Christ is helping you, but you know what another awesome part of Christianity is?
 - ii. We as Christians must help encourage each other as we are strong in the Christian faith.
 - 1. We must rejoice together when good things happen.
 - 2. We must tell each other how much we are loved and accepted by God.
 - 3. Sometimes we might hear our Christian brothers and sisters talking about their faults and we should remind them that they are overemphasizing

² Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament (2 Ti 2:5)*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

those parts and God loves and cares about them the way they are. God will work through them.

4. Sometimes we may hear about a situation that a brother or sister in Christ faced at work, something like holding to the truth or the rules, or working hard when no one else was, and we need to encourage them that they did the right thing even if it was difficult. We need to hear that encouragement.
5. This is why prayer groups are important

V. Application: consider what I say/meditate on the Scriptures

- a. In the end Paul tells Timothy to consider what he has said.
- b. Paul is saying to meditate on these words and also pray because God will give you understanding.

Close:

Children learn and so must we. In our Christian life it is the same. We must be strong and persevere, we must press on and we must keep walking and not give up. In the end, we have the eternal prize as God loves you and accepts you.

Pray